

**MINUTES
STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD
JANUARY 27, 2005**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Neil Bernstein, Chair
Robin Fortney
Cindy Peterson
Liz Christiansen
Scott Moats
Timothy Sproul
Laura Jackson

STAFF PRESENT

John Pearson
Daryl Howell
Merry Rankin

ADVISORS PRESENT

Bob McKay
Paul Christiansen

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Neil Bernstein called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM on January 27, 2005 at the Wallace State Office Building in Des Moines, Iowa.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

<p><i>Motion was made by Liz Christiansen to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Scott Moats.</i></p>

Neil Bernstein added the following items:

- Bob McKay – update on the geological preserve in the Fort Dodge Area
- Crossman Prairie update
- Discussion of management issues
- Ames High Prairie cell tower

<p><i>Motion carried unanimously.</i></p>
--

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to approve the minutes from the October 8, 2004 meeting. Seconded by Liz Christiansen. Motion carried unanimously.

LAMSON WOODS

A walking trail through the northeast part of Lamson Woods has been proposed to connect with a new trail outside of the Preserve. A letter was received in September clarifying all aspects relating to the proposed walking trail. Their intention is to preserve the integrity of Lamson Woods by having the lowest possible level of disturbance to the existing ecosystem. To that end, they proposed to do the following:

- Only use the existing, one person wide trail that is already in place.
- Promise that, this trail will never be widened, surfaced or improved.
- Have a limited amount of hand clipping of individual shrub stems growing into the trail, from the northeast corner of Preserve approximately 150' west, until the trail becomes open and clear.
- In the unlikely event that foot traffic on the new connector increases to the point that the footpath does need work, such as a gravel or mulch layer, installation of a waterbar, etc. to prevent excessive wear or erosion, the Trails Council and/or Park & Recreation department would make that improvement under the direction of the Preserve Board.

The plan was distributed for the Board's approval.

John Pearson said that there would be little physical effect to the preserve. John also contacted Mark Edwards, trail expert for the DNR, Mark said that there would be little impact to the preserve physically; he did suggest that the board consider the philosophical perspective of adding another trail to the preserve.

The preserve is managed by the City of Fairfield, they do not have a botanist on staff to help manage invasives. They currently do not have a management plan.

Robin Fortney made a motion to accept the trail proposal with the requirement that the City of Fairfield draft a management plan for Lamson Woods including the above directives regarding management of the trail. Seconded by Liz Christiansen. Motion carried unanimously.

BANISTER-MCGREGOR WOODS

The management plan for the proposed "Eureka Woods" preserve was circulated for review at the October meeting.

Neil Bernstein addressed the concerns that were brought to attention at the October meeting:

1. Using the artesian well for geo-thermal heating. Would that affect the integrity of the land? Neil requested more information on the owner's ideas for using the artesian well for geo-thermal heating. Will it affect the springs flow, Indian culture, or the status of the road? Is there even enough volume of water? Is it an artesian well or artesian spring?
2. Will the planned/proposed house interfere with any archeological sites?
3. Is the quarry included?
4. What about the archeological aspects of the preserve?
5. Signs being erected at the discretion of the owners?

John Pearson responded by using the management plan proposed for Eureka Woods.

- Location – pg. 2 identifies the legal description of Eureka woods. The quarry is not included as part of the preserve.
- Cultural Resources – pg. 8 an archeological survey was conducted on a portion of the proposed preserve. (not the whole preserve)
- Signs (State Preserves Boundary) will be posted on the corners of the preserve. Access is by permission only.
- Fencing will be kept in good repair to prevent livestock from entering the property. The McGregors/Banister are not comfortable with the language requiring them to maintain the fences.
 - Bruce Banister said his main concern is that they do want to be liable for a future fence because of the costs involved, since there is no fence in place at the Lost 40.
 - Tim Sproul said the Preserves Board system states that no livestock is allowed on the preserve, how that is accomplished is the individual's responsibility. That's a part of the management plan. If a fence is necessary or an agreement between you and the adjacent livestock owner to not have livestock, whatever it takes, the ultimate result needs to be that no livestock enters the preserve.
 - Bill McGregor said that a hot wire could be put up with little cost if that is necessary.
- John Pearson said that he attended the Public Information meeting on the proposed County Road E53 Improvements. A brochure was distributed on the purpose and need for improvements, data collection, potential alternatives, project history and future process. The County is still in the study process of this project. The potential alternatives for the north bridge, south bridge and the shadow route would all have impacts to the potential preserve, should they decide to move forward with construction. "*North Bridge*" – extends north of the intersection with K Avenue then curves to cross the Raccoon River north of existing Eureka Bridge; intersects Kirkwood Avenue north of existing E53 and connects back to

E53 between Kirkwood Ave and Linwood Ave. “*South Bridge*” – extends east from K Avenue then bears northeast to cross the Raccoon River south of the existing bridge then connects back with E53 east of Kirkwood Ave. “*Shadow Route*” – adjacent to the Eureka Bridge and connects with E53 at Kirkwood Ave.

- Bruce Banister said that the language allowing for an artisan well could be deleted.
- Neil Bernstein said in interest to the preserve:
 - Two species of deep forest birds were heard. (Wood thrush and Coopers hawk)
 - A fish survey of the ponds was completed and only common species were found.
 - Found cricket frogs during the frog and toad inventory. Cricket frogs have declined in northern Iowa but are still common in central and southern Iowa.

John Pearson said that a 100-foot strip of land in the SW corner will need to be excluded for an art studio that Bruce Banister is proposing to build.

Laura Jackson shared her concern that excluding a part of the preserve for an art studio may raise some issues from the public and appear that the Preserves board caters to people’s individual needs.

Bruce Banister said he understands her concerns. The people of Greene County are not interested in having a preserve, they would rather develop it. We knew from the beginning that the Preserve Board would not approve anything that does not meet their requirements for preserve status. We wanted to give this our best shot.

Laura Jackson said that before we move forward with this, we need to have enough justification for preserve status because we may get criticized.

Neil Bernstein said that if we do approve this management plan we have three months to receive comment, then the proposal goes to the Governor.

Neil mentioned that the “dead” wood on the forest floor gives habitat to many organisms. He would like to see it left alone.

Bill McGregor said that their goal is to keep the property as it is in its current state.

Neil Bernstein highlighted a few amendments that need to be made to the management plan:

- Remove the language for the artisan well.

- Revise the fencing language
- Include Cindy Peterson's archeological findings report.
- Small amendment to the signage language.

Motion was made by Laura Jackson to accept the management plan as amended. Seconded by Robin Fortney. Motion carried unanimously.

Dedication of the preserve will be voted upon at that next meeting. Public notice will be sent out.

SEED HARVEST POLICY

Staff requests that the Board review the seed harvest policy. The current policy does not address harvesting hay from the preserves and its potential use as a seed source.

Neil Bernstein said that our current policy prohibits mowing on state preserves. If we were to change the extension policy to include commercial harvest on select preserves each year, we may be able to accomplish several goals.

- 1) different management regime on a preserve
- 2) provide local ecotype seed
- 3) generate money to use for preserve maintenance, research, etc.

Robin Fortney said that we need to include haying because it's a good way to manage a preserve not just a way to generate money.

Bill Johnson, IDNR said that the policy should include removal of hay promptly, otherwise damage to the preserve could be done. Bill believes harvesting hay would be a great management tool.

Laura Jackson said that we need to include monitoring into an adaptive management plan. She suggested that we have students collect data on haying in order to see if we are accomplishing what we want.

Tim Sproul said that our current policy prohibits haying for livestock. Our policy says that it must be used for prairie restoration or buffer zones around preserves.

John Pearson said that we are trying to change the policy to allow more flexibility with the use of hay.

Laura Jackson said that we should consider the public's requests for the hay first before we sell privately.

Motion was made by Laura Jackson to table this item with the intent to establish a small subgroup to develop recommended language. Seconded by Robin Fortney. Motion carried unanimously.

Scott Moats and Bill Johnson will be a part of the subgroup to develop recommended language for the seed harvest policy.

FOSSIL AND PRAIRIE PARK

The Floyd County Conservation Board has nominated the Fossil and Prairie Park for preserve dedication. The final draft management plan was provided to Board members for review.

Scott Moats asked Barb McKinstry about the policy on wild fires.

Barb McKinstry said that the only problem with open burning as a management tool would be with our adjacent landowners. They own crop fields adjacent to the preserve and there could be issues of liability should the fire get out of control.

Laura Jackson asked about vandalism to the kilns.

Barb McKinstry said the matter was taken care of a couple of years ago by adding iron bars on the entry doors.

John Pearson said that he has a couple more rare plant species to add to the list.

Motion was made by Liz Christiansen to approve this management plan pending minor edits. Seconded by Scott Moats. Motion carried unanimously.

The final decision will be made at the next preserve meeting.

HARTMAN PRESERVE

The Governor has signed the Hartman Preserve dedication papers.

FAREWELL TO PAUL CHRISTIANSEN

Neil Bernstein thanked Paul Christiansen for his efforts and dedication as an advisor to the preserves board.

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH AND INVENTORY PROPOSALS FOR FY 2006

The State Preserves Advisory Board and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources are soliciting proposals for inventory and research projects on state preserves. Proposals will be considered for biological, archaeological, geological or historical inventories and other research for the state preserves program. Currently, we anticipate having between \$25,000 and \$30,000 to fund several projects.

Funding is dependent on state appropriations that will be determined during the 2005 Legislative Session. The State Preserves Advisory Board and the DNR will not know if funds are available until early June. The Preserves Advisory Board will select projects at the April board meeting, contingent upon funding availability.

Cindy Peterson suggested that even though funding maybe limited for a 300 acre archaeological site, maybe we could divide it up and fund portions of the preserve or set up a three year plan.

<i>Information Only</i>

BIENNIAL REPORT

The 2003-2004 report on the status of state preserves was sent to the Governor and the Legislature. Dr. Neil Bernstein, board chair prepared the cover letter for the report.

<i>Information Only</i>

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A CULTURAL FIELD SCHOOL AT FORT ATKINSON PRESERVE

Lynn Alex with the State Archeologist Office is applying for a grant to once again have a field school at Fort Atkinson State Preserve. She is requesting permission from the Board to hold the Field School from July 31 – August 6, 2005. If you have any questions or would like a complete description of the field school, please contact Lynn Alex at lynn-alex@uiowa.edu

Cindy Peterson said that ground radar will be used to detect geological sites, rather than digging and causing ground damage on the preserve.

Merry Rankin offered her assistance to help guide local groups to raise funds for the restoration of the historical church building.

<i>Motion was made by Robin Fortney to approve the request. Seconded by Scott Moats. Motion carried unanimously.</i>

OPEN DISCUSSION

- **City of Fort Dodge**

Bob McKay and Neil Bernstein wrote a letter to the City of Fort Dodge – Todd Redinus, Director of Parks and Recreation, introducing the State Preserves system's functions and that the board was interested in some of the out crops on city land. Todd received the letter and acknowledged that

he would consider it and get back with Bob. Todd Redinus has since then retired. The interim director was sent an electronic copy, but they said that no decision will be made until a full time director is hired.

- **Ames High Prairie**

John Pearson was informed two months ago by Erv Klaas who volunteers for The Nature Conservancy as a steward to Ames High Prairie Preserve, that a mono-pole cell tower is proposed just outside the northeast preserve boundary of Ames High Prairie. The tower is not expected to cause any physical damage. There will be some scenic intrusion, but the scenery surrounding the tower already consists of a parking lot and the back of the school.

- **Crossman Prairie**

Neil Bernstein said that Scott Moats has been dealing with the individual (adjacent landowner) involved with plowing and ditching at Crossman Prairie.

Scott Moats has contacted the land owner over the phone.

Neil Bernstein, John Pearson, Daryl Howell, Scott Moats and Liz Christiansen had a phone conversation with Jon Tack, an attorney from the DNR's Legal Services bureau. At this time, the Board does not have a lot of legal authority to enforce penalties. The landowner apologized and agreed to fix the land damage.

Scott Moats said that a letter has been drafted by The Nature Conservancy informing the landowner on the seriousness of their actions and requesting appropriate restorations. Scott will forward the letter to John Pearson for review and further comments.

Laura Jackson said that there needs to be more knowledge, respect and awareness of the preserve system and its natural value.

- **Friends Group**

Merry Rankin said that she received the prairie preserve guidelines for a friends group. We are currently developing a web page for volunteers to go on-line to register and sign up/view voluntary events. There will also be an opportunity for groups such as The Nature Conservancy, the Heritage Foundation, etc. to go on-line requesting volunteers for their event. Merry stressed the importance of proper training for volunteers when dealing with plant species, invasives, etc.

Neil Bernstein said his concern is monitoring. It would be very helpful to have an individual visit a preserve at least once a month.

- **Management Issues**

Laura Jackson said that we have started preserve awareness and monitoring by listing articles in the Conservationist, developing a friends group, board visits and generating management plans for all new and old preserves.

Laura suggested the following ideas dealing with management of preserves:

- Hold a winter seminar or a one-day hands-on field school during the summer time for land managers. This could include a meal(s), entertainment, award/recognition ceremony, expertise training, etc.
- As far as funding issues, we should consider submitting grant proposals to REAP for management activities.
- Laura questioned the board spending money on inventory lists, though they are great to have, at this point maybe the money could be better utilized in managing preserves, possibly hosting a one day seminar.
- We could look at the Request for Proposals and rewrite it for next year to solicit projects that will encourage more management.

Scott Moats said that he is willing to move forward with a field day as long as we could recruit diverse expertise.

Laura Jackson said that administrative support is needed to help carry out the organizational and planning stages of developing a one day seminar. Look into possible resources currently available.

Cindy Peterson asked if there is a prairie land managers list serve to share ideas and to remind individuals about the preserve board.

Tim Sproul said that the seminar needs to be promoted as an invaluable event with pertinent information and expert speakers/hosts. DVD's or CD's could be made for those unable to attend.

John Pearson said that we could target a regional field day to visit several areas that have projects going on, including at least two preserves.

Daryl Howell said that we could distribute information and data from seminars, field studies, best management practices, tips from other managers, species lists, etc. on CD to land managers.

John Pearson said he will look into organizing a regional field day(s) this year, targeting land managers, to an area where we could visit several preserve and non-preserve sites. John will also look into what is needed to develop a list serve of all preserve managers and a CD of information and lists relating to the field day. John said that he will work with Scott Moats in developing a tour route for the field days and bring back the recommendations in April.

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2005

March 31st – April 1st
July 7th – 8th
October 10th – 11th
January 5th – 6th, 2006

John Pearson and Daryl Howell will set up the locations and tours, and then notify the board members.

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Motion was made by Robin Fortney to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Liz Christiansen. Motion carried unanimously.</i>
--

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Neil Bernstein adjourned the meeting at 3:05 AM on January 27, 2005.

A

Adjournment, 10
Approval of agenda, 1
Approval of Minutes, 2

B

Banister-McGregor Woods, 2
biennial report, 7
Board Members Present, 1

C

call to order, 1

F

Fossil and prairie park, 6

L

Lamson woods, 2

M

Meeting Schedule for 2005, 10

O

open discussion, 7

R

Request For research and inventory proposals for fy
2006, 6
request to conduct a cultural field school at fort
atkinson preserve, 7

S

Seed Harvest Request, 5
staff present, 1